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SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: FAIR ASEC TU
SUBJECT: CRASH OF ATLASJET FLIGHT FROM ISTANBUL TO ISPARTA, TURKEY
30 NOVEMBER, 2007

Sensitive But Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

¶11. (SBU) Summary: An Atlasjet flight from Istanbul to Isparta, Turkey crashed 12 km from the Isparta Airport at approximately 01:45 local time on 30 November, 2007. The plane was a McDonald-Douglas MD 83. The remains of all 57 onboard have been located by Search and Rescue teams. The pilot, Serhat Ozdemir, is reported by his sister to be a naturalized U.S. Citizen, but we have been unable to confirm this. The cause of the crash has not been determined but has been speculated as either mechanical failure or pilot error. NTSB, FAA, Boeing and Pratt and Whitney Engines representatives will arrive in Antalya, Turkey on 2 December to assist with the investigation. Turkish Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) Director Ali Ariduru spoke personally with us on the evening of 30 November and asked specifically that NO U.S. AGENCY ANNOUNCE AT THIS TIME OUR ASSISTANCE WITH THE INVESTIGATION. We agreed to respect DGCA's wishes as they deal with press speculation. End summary.

DGCA PRESS STATEMENT

¶12. (U) The following is a grammatically-corrected version of the Turkish DGCA's press release about the crash:

The MD 83, TC-AKM registered aircraft with 165 seat capacity was operated by World Focus Airlines and wet leased by Atlasjet Aviation Corporation. Following the aircraft's take off from Istanbul Ataturk Airport at 00:51 local time, communication was interrupted with the aircraft at final approach to Isparta Suleyman Demirel Airport at 01:45 local time. There were 2 pilots, 4 cabin crew, 1 technician and 49 passengers in the aircraft.

The aircraft crashed at Turbe Tepe, located 12 km from the Isparta Airport between Cukuroren and Yenitepe villages southwest of Keciborlu. A Search and Rescue (SAR) team has been moved to the area by the Isparta governorship. At the moment there are Police and Turkish Air Force helicopters at the wreckage area. A Turkish DGCA Accident Investigation Team has moved to the wreckage area.

Crisis Centers formed at the DGCA and in Istanbul and Isparta are following the situation.

Progression of events on 30 November, 2007:

06:55 SAR teams arrived at the crash site. According to the first investigation, no survivors were found. Medical teams and

ambulances moved to the area. Dr. Ali Ariduru, DGCA Director General, and Orhan Birdal, Acting Director General of the State Airports Administration, arrived at the site.

08:45 Minister of Transport Binali Yildirim arrived in Isparta with two DGCA Accident Investigation Experts.

10:30 Yildirim, together with Isparta Governor Semsettin Uzun and accompanying officials, arrived at the crash site.

The Accident Investigation Team at the site is comprised of 2 captain pilots, 3 engineers and 1 air traffic controller.

12:00 The Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and the Flight Data Recorder (FDR) were found at the crash site and an investigation is being performed by the DGCA Accident Investigation Team.

12:20 An Atlasjet flight transporting the victims' families arrived at Isparta airport.

12:50 53 of 56 people who lost their lives in the aircraft were found by the SAR operations.

13:30 According to the Passenger Manifest, 49 passengers and 1 infant were in the aircraft, raising the total number of casualties to 57. All victims have been found by the SAR. End text.

CAUSE OF CRASH UNKNOWN AT THIS TIME

13. (SBU) The cause of the crash has not been determined at this time. Speculation and the images of the wreckage suggest either mechanical failure or pilot error. Representatives from the

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National Transportation Safety Bureau (NTSB), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Boeing and Pratt and Whitney Engines will arrive in Antalya, Turkey on Sunday, 2 December to assist with the investigation. They will be met and assisted by representatives from the Turkish DGCA during their time in Turkey. TURKISH DGCA DIRECTOR GENERAL ARIDURU SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THAT NO ANNOUNCEMENT BE MADE AT THIS TIME BY ANY USG AGENCY THAT WE WILL ASSIST WITH THE INVESTIGATION.

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14. (SBU) Media reports quote the sister of the aircraft's captain, Serhat Ozdemir, who says that Ozdemir lived in the U.S. and subsequently became a naturalized American citizen. We have been unable to confirm his citizenship and believe that the sister might be mistaken. His next of kin reside in Izmir, Turkey and Consular officer are therefore not needed to provide death notification or repatriation of remains.

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